How to Impress the Wired Wealthy

Here are proven ways to attract rich philanthropists to your organization.

By Jenny Henry

You know that online giving is growing, but you may not know that the very wealthy are among those who prefer giving online.

A recent study defined "very wealthy" donors as those who give at least $1,000 per year to a single cause, average $10,896 in donations per year, and have a median gift size of $4,500. They're the kind of donors you want, for while they make up only 1% of donors, they're responsible for 32% of nonprofits' annual gifts. According to this study, conducted by Sea Change Strategies, more than half prefer giving online, and 80% do at least some of their donating via the Internet.[1]

Unfortunately, however, less than half of respondents thought nonprofit Web sites were well-designed or inspiring. Here are two things you can do to impress these wealthy donors and capitalize on the growth in online giving:

1. Make Key Information Easy to Find

A study by the Nielsen Norman Group finds that if you want to encourage online donations, your Web site must be user-friendly and answer a prospective donor's questions.[2] The good news is, you can predict what questions a prospective donor will have. When study participants were asked what they want answered on nonprofit Web sites before they decide whether to donate,

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they responded with two basic questions:

- **What are you trying to achieve?** What are your goals, objectives, mission, and vision? What work does your organization do?
- **How will you spend my money?** How do you use donations?

Of the nonprofit Web sites studied, only 43% answered the first question on their home page, and an astonishingly low 4% answered the second question. While this information often existed somewhere on the site, users expressed considerable frustration with finding it.

So if you don't answer those two questions on your home page, make that your first priority. Don't hide this information in the "About Us" section. You have only a short time to impress potential donors, so be sure your home page showcases what great things you do and how you use donations.

2. Make the Donation Process Easy

Now think what a shame it would be to impress wealthy prospects with what wonderful things your organization does and how their donations can help, and then lose them when they try to donate. Believe it or not, it happens all the time.

Take a good look at the donation process on your Web site. If it's too long or complicated, it can be a deal breaker for potential donors. Here are some simple things you can do to ensure the donation process goes smoothly:

- **Have a "Donate Now" button** on each page of your Web site.
- **Make sure** the "Donate Now" button lets donors go straight to the donation page rather than a page that links to the donation page. An extra page gives donors a chance to change their minds,

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and it's frustrating for donors who are ready to donate.

- **Let donors** enter their donation information first, before you ask them anything else. The exciting part for donors is giving, so get to this part fast and they'll be happy. Then you can ask them for any additional information required.
- **Ensure that your Web site** accepts credit cards. According to the Sea Change Strategies study, a good portion of the wired wealthy donate using credit cards because they like to collect the benefits associated with their premium cards.
- **Take care that the payment page** opens up inside the Web site itself. On some nonprofit sites, the payment page looks entirely different from the rest of the Web site. Potential donors see this as a red flag, and they may quickly lose trust and abandon the donation. ■

Footnotes

[1] "The Wired Wealthy: Using the Internet to Connect with Your Middle and Major Donors," Sea Change Strategies, http://my.convio.com/?elqPURLPage=104

[2] "Donation Usability: Design Guidelines for Improving the Donation Process and the Usability of Essential Information on Charity and Nonprofit Web Sites," Nielsen Norman Group, http://www.nngroup.com/reports/donations/

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